Linking Rural Producer with the Urban Consumer

1912. SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Unking of rural producer with the urban consumer through agro-processing and agri-business enterprises has become a bare necessity; and

(b) if so, what steps are being taken by Government in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU): (a) and (b) The Government has taken a number of Policy Initiatives to promote the growth of the processing sector in the country. Development of Food Processing Industries includes, *inter alia,* processing of agro-horticultural produce which is mainly available in rural areas. Consumption of such processed food is mainly in urban centres, due to a variety of reasons. Under the Plan Schemes of the Development of Food Processing Industries which are project-oriented, financial assistance is extended to Non-Governmental Organisations, Cooperatives, Public Sector Undertakings, Private Sector Industries, Human Resource Development and Research & Development Institutions for the development of this Sector including setting up/expansion/ modernization of food processing units.

The Department of Food Processing Industries is in the process of formulating a National Food Processing Policy which broadly covers issues relating to availability of raw material backward linkages, processing facilities including post-harvest infrastructure, packaging, food quality and safety, marketing of products awareness about processed foods etc.